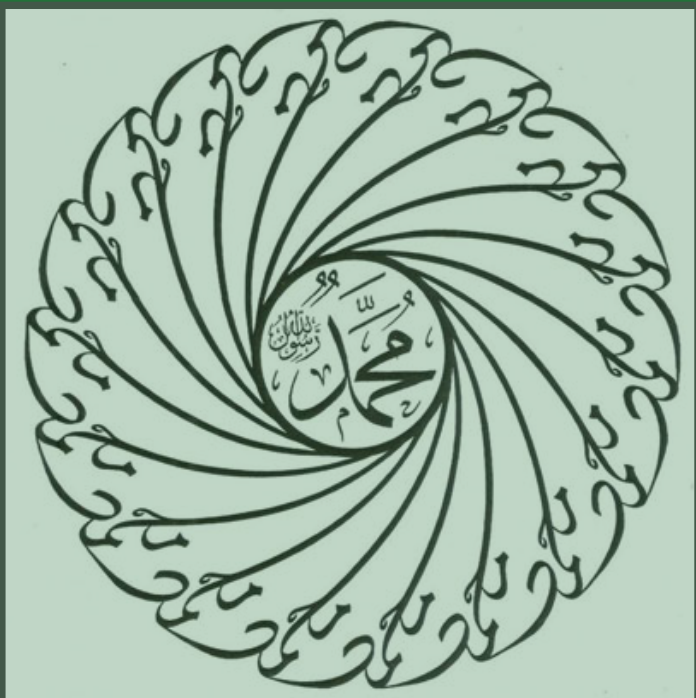


on the mawlid



*from a bayān given on the occasion
of the Blessed Mawlid of 1433
at:*

The Islamic Study Center
Charlottesville, Virginia
2012/1433

by
Shaykh A. Nooruddeen Durkee

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ ۖ فَأَمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ النَّبِيَّ الْأُمِّيَّ الَّذِي يُوْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ
وَكَلِمَاتِهِ وَاتَّبِعُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

qul yāā °ayyuha-n-nāsu °innī rasūlu-llāhi °ilaykum jamī°an °alladhī
lahu mulku-s-samāwātī wa-l-ard: lā ilaha °illā huwa yuhyī wa
yumīt: fa-āāminū bi-llāhi wa rasūlihi-n-nabiyyi-l-°ummiyyi-lladhī
yu°minu bi-llāhi wa kalimātihi wa °ittabi°ūhu la°allakum tahtadūn

Say: “Oh you people, I am but a messenger from Allāh to you all
[from Allāh] Who is the Owner of the Heavens and the Earth.

There is no deity except Him; He gives life and brings death.

Believe in Allāh and His messenger,

the Unlettered Prophet who believes in Allāh and His words:

follow him so you may be guided.

(Suratut-l-A°raf 7:158)

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It was the first morning in the month of Şafar in the year 1433 after the Hijra and it was time for the dawn prayer (*ṣalātu-l-fajr*/صلاة الفجر).

As always I got up, made my *wūdū*³ (وضوء), went downstairs to our *musallah* (prayer space/مصلاة). Since we live on a farm in a very rural area of Virginia more than a half an hour from a masjid I usually pray my fajr at home with my family. In any case I got out the prayer rugs, went out on the porch, made the *adhān* (أذان), came in, prayed my sunnah and waited for the rest of the family to join me.

After we were all together we made our ṣalāh and then began our usual morning reading of the Qurʾān which lasts until a little bit before or after the rising of the sun (*shurūq aṣḥ-ṣhams*/شروق الشمس).

I had been up late the night before working and I was still pretty tired so after *shurūq aṣḥ-ṣhams* I went back upstairs to catch a few more hours of sleep before beginning the day.

Nothing unusual in all of this, as this is how my days have begun for the past forty years or more ever since I accepted ʾIslam as a twenty something year old in the Holy City of al-Quds aṣḥ-Ṣhareef (aka Jerusalem) while working on a book on the Holy City.

Oh! One thing I left out is that the first of Şafar (صفر) in 1433 which coincided that year with the Gregorian date of the twenty-fifth of December known as Christmas Day in the western Christian world.

I had kind of vaguely registered this but only vaguely since Christmas is not a day that has figured in my calendar for more than the forty years or so I mentioned above. But when I woke up again I began thinking about it and that set off a round of *recherche du temps perdu* in my mind and the memories of past Christmases – way past.

I grew up in a very religious Roman Catholic household and became an altar boy from a very early age which meant that every morning I was in church to serve at the six o'clock mass – something, as a Muslim, I have always been very grateful for since it got me in the habit of waking early in the morning from my youth.

In case I would have gotten up around 5:45 and, not eating or drinking anything so as to preserve my fast so I could take Communion, I would slip down the stairs of our apartment building in New York and walk the two blocks in the dark morning to the church and slip

into my cassock and surplice and go light the candles on the altar and then help the priest as he put on his vestments. There were always two of us altar boys unless I was serving mass in the nearby convent of Devin Claire for the nuns in which case I would be the sole altar boy attending the priest who was celebrating the morning Mass for an order of nuns who were Carmelites which is a traditional Catholic community of contemplative nuns who, generally, don't go out in the world but live a life of contemplation and prayer.

I liked serving mass there because I got to have breakfast with the priest and the nuns after mass and it was always really good.

In any case had it been a Christmas morning I would have gone home, had breakfast and immediately gotten ready to go back to the church since Christmas was a Holy Day of Obligation and there was solemn high mass which required a whole crew of altar boys to serve as crucifers, torch bearers and thurifers (caretakers of the incense burners or *thuribles*) and acolytes of one type and another plus the full choir and a priest, a deacon and sub-deacon and, all-in-all, it was quite an elaborate, moving and exalted affair and many of my very first mystical experiences took place at such ceremonies.

By the way an altar boy looks something like this:



After that was all over we (because of course my whole family was there) went home and had brunch, as by now the morning had gotten on, and then — then we went into the living room and there under the Christmas tree (which I loved for its smell and the lights and shiny ornaments — not to mention the Lionel electric train going round and round and the little cast lead ice-skaters skating on a mirror reflecting the multi-colored lights above, surrounded by white cotton to look like snow — and somewhat incongruously — in the place of honor — the Christmas crèche — because as modern Christians always try to make known, Jesus *is* the reason for the season.

Jesus was in the manger and Mary and Joseph and the three Wise-men or Magi, one on this camel, bearing gifts of gold and two to the side in positions of adoration with their gifts of frankincense and myrrh and above it all, on the top of the tree, the beautiful radiant 12 pointed silver star which was always the last thing put up (periously on a ladder by my father) and the first thing taken down.

And around this were the many boxes, in good times, and fewer boxes in meaner and tighter times, of the presents we had all gotten each other and some which has come by the Railway Express (predating FedEx and BigBrown) and the Post Office from distant aunties and uncles and our grandparents.

Ah those boxes in their many colored wrapping paper and bows and the attached cards and little notes saying from whom it had come and so forth.

After everyone was assembled some mysterious signal was given and a massive feeding frenzy began which my mom tried to supervise telling us not to tear up the wrappings as we can use them for “next year and birthdays” – I guess moms are always like that.

And then after a half hour or so, longer if there were cousins and other relatives present, and a lot of happy laughter and always more than a few tears of disappointment (how many pair of socks or ties does one need?) especially when one was expecting a chemistry set or a new tube of Lincoln Logs (predating Leggo Sets) or, perhaps a microscope or even a new car for the electric train or a special cattle crossing or even a milk-can pickup where the train stopped and a little mechanical man loaded buckets of milk onto the train.

Well after that half hour or so it was kind of like the tide went out and everybody, especially the kids, was sitting around surrounded by their booty in a kind of post frenzy daze and – that was Christmas and that’s how it went. Something like a wierd ‘Eidu-l-Fiṭr.

Years later when I had become, in an intellectually fashionable way, an “agnostic” and had married outside the church (which had in any case become irrelevant) to a loosely imagined Protestant, the same kind of thing continued minus the church part but with a lot more attention devoted to the giving and getting of – *presents* – or stuff. and lots of it as the more you gave signified the more you loved which in turn was the key to being loved so giving equaled getting.

Indeed by that time it seemed that the reason for the season had very little to do with Jesus and just about everything to do with shopping and getting and giving presents and there was a lot of very understated economic warfare that was involved in the shopping, the giving and – especially – the getting of presents, but the tree was still there, and the train and the skater on the mirror but the crèche had disappeared or, if we were at relatives who were slightly religious, it was there but there in a kind of subdued and vestigial way.

Flash forward to the year 2011 and after having been a Muslim for more than 40 years (I am in my seventies now), and kind of day dreaming and thinking back on all that, I reflect that I am very happy to be a Muslim and I simply get up in the morning of the 25th, which is a morning like every other morning except for whatever the weather of the day is, and standing out on the porch in the dark to make ^ʿ*adhān* – and yes I know it is rural America and no one, most likely, is going to come, but my Shaykh ﷺ told me always to make the ^ʿ*adhān* because, if nothing else, the angels hear it and they come and, who knows, maybe the call will echo out over the vast spiritual spaces of America and maybe, just maybe, if not now then later – some one will come. And then making my *ṣalāt* and reading the Qurʾan and – hey! – I think it really doesn’t get any better than this.

Well you may wonder why I am telling you all this at a Mawlid.

Well first of looking around you can see this ain’t Christmas no matter how much the psuedo-salafis and the Wahhabis would like you to think that we are here having a wild *bidah* birthday party and that Mawlid is a cognate for Christmas and we are all surely going to hell for *shirk* and polytheism and we are all, especially us reverts, cyprto-Christians hankering after Chirstmases past.

Well if it “ain’t” (and it certainly isn’t) then what is it?

First and foremost the Mawlid is a means of educating Muslims, many of whom in truth, have very little idea of who or what Muḥammad ﷺ was and, perhaps, more importantly, is.

As for you who wonder where an old ex-Christian white boy gets off lecturing Muslims about the Prophet ﷺ, I remind you that I spent four years studying at the *Kuliyat ash-Shariat* in Makkah Mukarramah and seven more years studying with my shaykh who taught for twenty-five years at al-ʿAzhar and who has specifically given me ijazah and the ʿidhīn to teach ʿIslam here in the West.

And while I am aware that the ignorance of the Muslim community about the nature and being of the Prophet ﷺ is not by any means universal, it certainly is endemic and an ever growing phenomena in the Muslim community in America and, oddly, especially amongst the immigrant community and especially those who have been influenced by a flood of Saudi petrodollars, that have bought up masajid and flooded the market with their many books and dubious educational materials as well as by the 'Ikhwani rationalists emanating from the alphabet soup and pot luck Muslim community.

By “alphabet soup” I mean those various organisations formed by acronyms which mainly only serve mainly as marriage bureaux and talking shops, and by “pot luck Muslims” I refer to the phenomenon of the Muslim Saturday night out at the local Elks Club or Holiday Inn or the basement of the local Masjid featuring a suitably business suited and tied five day stubble bearded “speaker”, cold birynai and stodgy cheese and mac washed down with Diet Coke whilst listening to an utterly banal talk on some subject like Islam: Trials and Tribulations, or Islam: The Challenges Ahead (and, please note, the colon *is* an integral part of the title of the speech).

I have come to know and understand what I am talking about both by dint of having taught the children of Muslims here in the Americas for more than twenty years and through my interactions with their parents and various self important, and always officious, board members of masajid that are, for most of the time, empty.

So in a very particular sense we can say that a major reason behind holding these mawlid is that of helping to educate the community (‘*ummah*/أمة) here in North America, and Europe for that matter, as to the the nature and being of the Prophet ﷺ.



When talking or writing about the Prophet ﷺ we must understand that we must always see him ﷺ in two very different dimensions or perspectives; one of which is of his ﷺ other worldly transcendent and even, pre-eternal, being and the other of which is the immanent or worldly dimension of his blessed being ﷺ in the sense that he was born, lived, fulfilled his mission and died in this world.

Perhaps it is best to start with the worldly dimension of his being as it is most accessible to the largest number of people.

Allāh ﷻ says,

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِنْ رِجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ

mā kāna muḥammadun °abā° aḥadin mir-rijalikum
wa lakir-rasūla-llāhi wa khātama-n-nabiyyin

Muhammad is not the father of any of your men,
but the Messenger of Allāh and the Final Seal of the Prophets
(Sūratu-l-°Aḥzab 33:40)

and

قُلْ سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ هَلْ كُنْتُ إِلَّا بَشَرًا مِثْلَ رَسُولٍ
وَمَا مَعَ النَّاسِ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ هُدًى إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا أَبْعَثَ اللَّهُ بَشَرًا مِثْلَ رَسُولٍ

qul subḥāna rabbī hal kuntu °illā baṣḥarān rasūlā:
wa mā manā°a-n-nāsa °an yu°minū °idḥ jā°ahumu-l-huda
°illa °an qālū °aba°atha-llāhu baṣḥarar-rasūlā

Say: 'Glory be to my Lord! Am I anything but a human messenger?
What kept men back from belief when Guidance came to them,
was nothing but this:
they said, "Has Allāh sent a man (like us) to be (His) Messenger?"
(Sūrah °Isra 17:93-94)

and

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ فَأَمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ النَّبِيُّ الْأُمِّيَّ الَّذِي يَأْمُرُ بِاللَّهِ
وَكَلِمَاتِهِ وَاتَّبِعُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

qul yā°a ayyuha-n-nāsu °innī rasūlu-llāhi °ilaykum jamī°an °alladhī
lahu mulku-s-samāwātī wa-l-arḍ: lā ilaha °illā huwa yuhyī wa
yumīt: fa-āaminū bi-llāhi wa rasūlihi-n-nabiyyi-l-°ummiyyi-lladhī
yu°minu bi-llāhi wa kalimātihi wa °ittabi°ūhu la°allakum tahtadūn

Say: "Oh you people, I am but a messenger from Allāh to you all
[from Allāh] Who is the Owner of the Heavens and the Earth.
There is no deity except Him; He gives life and brings death.
Believe in Allāh and His Messenger,
the Unlettered Prophet who believes in Allāh and His words:
follow him so you may be guided.

(Suratut-l-A°raf 7:158)

وَقَالُوا آمَالِ هَذَا الرَّسُولِ يَأْكُلُ الطَّعَامَ وَيَمْشِي فِي الْأَسْوَاقِ
لَوْلَا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْهِ الْمَلَكُ فَيَكُونُ مَعَهُ نَذِيرًا

wa qalū māli hadha-r-rasūli ya°kulu-ṭ-ṭa°āma wa yamshī fi-l-aswāq;
law lā °unzila °ilayhi malakun fa-yakūna ma°ahu nadhīrā

And they say: What kind of a messenger is this
who eats food and walks around the market places?
Why hasn't an angel been sent down to [help] him;
[and] to act as a warner together with him?"

(Sūratu-l-Furqān 25:7)

and

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُ الْكَوْنِ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ

qul °innamā °anā basharum-mithlukum
yūḥa °ilayyā° °annamā° °ilahukum °ilahun wāḥid

Say: I am only a mortal like you.

My Lord revealed to me that your Allāh is only One Allāh.

(Sūratu-l-Kahf 18:110)



So for the people of appearances – the people of the body (*aṣḥāb-e-badan*) – these °āyat and others are mainly what they know of the Messenger ﷺ and how they see, apprehend and understand him.

They are the people of the *ḍahīr* who do not grasp the *bāṭin* and fail to understand the connection between *bāṭin* and *ḍahīr* and how everything actually comes from within to without, from the inner (*bāṭin*) to the outer (*ḍahīr*), and those who live “in the outer” must return to the inner to reach the knowledge of Muḥammad ﷺ for °ilm or knowledge is the point of balance – the fulcrum on which the two worlds, that of the *ḍahīr* and that of the *bāṭin*, are suspended and it is °ilm that maintains an equilibrium between them. If the *bāṭin* gives direction and meaning to the *ḍahīr*, the *ḍahīr* constitutes in turn the basis and indispensable support for the *bāṭin*, for without esotericism, exotericism loses its meaning, and without exotericism, esotericism finds itself stripped of its foundation and base.

And increasingly it is in this Muslim world we find ourselves.

Take a little excursion on the internet and you find a world where Muḥammad ﷺ, the Prophet of Allāh ﷻ, has been so reduced in stature that he is seen as little more than an illiterate messenger.

“Partially this has come about due to the fact that upward of 80% of the *masājīd* in the U.S belong to the Wahhabi or psuedo-Salafi school of thought, largely due to huge Saudi petro dollar spending. The Saudi government has spent an unbelievable \$87B to promote Wahhabism in the United States, Africa, Southeast Asia and Europe. Saudi aid to Muslims, however, always comes with strings attached, and most of the recipient institutions end up promoting the Wahhabi version of Islam. In this context Wahhabi agents have sought to impose their ideology on all who attend the *masājīd* they control. The Saudis have allocated considerable line-item space toward building religious institutions that promote the Wahhabi version of Islam. The Saudis have funded more than 80 percent of the same Wahhabi-influenced *masājīd* built in the US within the last 20 years. Although the Wahhabi/Salafi sect is in fact a small minority within the larger Muslim world it is believed that most of the new American converts to ʾIslām follow the Wahhabi/Salafi version of ʾIslām, due mainly to the fact that most of the *masājīd* in the U.S are under their nominal control. An estimated 30,000 Muslim children now attend Saudi-funded Wahhabi day schools in America.”

“The Saudis, meanwhile, have directed considerable outreach toward the Afro-American Muslim community which is the largest Muslim community in America. In one effort to showcase the bounties of Wahhabism to this target audience, King Fahd pledged \$8M for a lavish mosque in shabby South Central Los Angeles and the Saudi Islamic Development Bank pledged an additional \$295,000 for a school attached to the mosque. From the Saudi perspective, this and other similar contributions are less an expense than an investment.”

What I have quoted above comes from the net and mainly reflects the common perception of the situation affecting Muslims in the USA but the same circumstances hold true across the wider Muslim world where, for the past century, or really since the post WWII rise of the *Kingdom* of Saudi Arabia as a major petro-power in the world, the advocates and adherents of Wahhabism or Salafism or Deobandism or, what is also termed Archaic Revivalism, or, simply, neo-Kharijism, have actively sought to promote their ideas of who and what the Prophet ﷺ of ʾIslām is or is not and, for the most part, their outlook is in opposition to long-held traditional understanding. What, you may ask, does this have to do with understanding the internal or esoteric nature of the Prophet ﷺ?

The traditional ʿIslāmic views and the knowledge (ʿilm) that comes along concerning the esoteric relaiity of the Prophet ﷺ have informed the world wide Muslim community (ʿummah) for centuries but now, in the course of less than a hundred years, we are reaching the point where, in-creasingly, the Muslim community has become less and less aware of the internal realities of the Prophet ﷺ.

And it is not a side issue to say that the strenuous opposition on the behalf of the Najdi neo-Kḥarajites to the holding and observation of the Mawlid is part and parcel of the campaign to cause and bring about the loss of this traditional knowledge and understanding, nor is it a side issue to point out that, famously, when asked to give his blessing to Najd, the Prophet ﷺ refused three times to do so.

Consider the following extracted from one of the many sites on the net condemning the observation of the mawlid:

This material originated from the Jamiatul Ulama (KwaZulu Natal) and the Jamiatul Ulama (Transvaal) and was obviously floated on the Internet, because the net is accessed by millions of computer users. These sites regularly use the net to launch flagrant attacks on the ʿImān and ʿAqīda of Sunni Muslims and the sincere followers of *Ahle Sunnah wa Jamaʿah*, to whose beliefs and teachings the majority of traditional Muslims the world over ascribe.

Muslims must also take cognizance of the fact that the source of the fatwā employed by these people was Aḥmad Bin Baaz of the Saudi Government, who refused in his lifetime to fulfill his duty as the Head of Department of Islamic Researches and Propagation in his own country in issuing and fatāwa against the evil practices of the Saudi Royal Family, such as gambling, interest banking, etc. not to mention his subtly condoning the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

This fatwā against Mawālīd was met with strong displeasure in the Muslim world which regards the celebration of Milādu-n-Nabī as a beneficial and desirous act. In opposition and contrary to the fatwā of Bin Baaz, Ṣaykh Sayyid Alawi Malik of Makkah and Ṣaykh Sayed Hashim ar-Rifaʿī of Kuwait both produced lengthy fatawas on the permissibility of Milādu-n-Nabī celebrations.

According to the great Muḥaddith, Shams ad-Din Muḥammad as-Sahawi (d.902 A.H.), the assembling for Milād in Muslim history began in the 3rd Century A.H. and it was only Ibn Taymiya (d.728 A.H.), some five centuries later, who was the first to begin argumentation and contention against this practice.

Serendipitously all of this furore triggered off a tremendous increase in Milādu-n-Nabī celebrations amongst the Arab populations of the cities of Makkah, Madinah, Jeddah, Ta'if, etc. and in the Gulf States to the point where, last year, an officially sanctioned Milād was *permitted* for the first time in a century in Madinah itself but after a lot of damage had been done and, more importantly, confusion was sown and there has been a great loss of knowledge in the Muslim ʿummah as to ‘*who*’ exactly Muḥammad ﷺ was and, importantly, is.

In any case here is the unedited fatwā issued by the arch-conservative Wahhabi, Aḥmad bin Bāz from the *Kingdom* of Saudi Arabia:



THE ISLAMIC LEGAL VIEW-POINT
ON CELEBRATING THE ANNIVERSARY
BIRTHDAY (MAWLID) OF THE PROPHET
(Peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him)

Praise be to Allāh, and peace and blessings be unto his Apostle as well as unto the Apostle’s family, companions, and whomsoever was rightly guided by him. And now to our topic:

The question is often broached by a lot of people about the Islamic legal view-point on celebrating the anniversary birthday (Mawlid) of the Prophet (Peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him), keeping vigil in the meantime, and extending peace greeting to him, etc., such as what is quite often done on the feasts (Mawalid).

And the answer is that it is inadmissible to celebrate the anniversary birthday of the Prophet (Peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) or that of anyone else, since it is one of the heretic evils brought about in religion, as the Apostle (Peace and blessings of Allāh be unto him) never did so, and neither did his true Caliphs, or others of his companions- may Allāh be pleased with all of them- or those who followed them with good faith in the pre-eminent centuries; let alone the fact that they were more versed in Sunnah, and more perfect than their descendants in revealing their affection to the Apostle (Peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) as well as in observing his tradition. It is established as valid that the Prophet (Peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) said: (If anyone introduces into this affair of ours anything which does not belong to it, it is rejected.) In another tradition he said: (You must observe my own precepts [Sunnah], and the precepts of the Rightly Guided True Caliphs after me. Let all of you abide by them, and cling stubbornly to them, and beware of novelties, since each novelty is a heresy, and each heresy is an error).

Both traditions involve a strong admonition against bringing about and acting on the strength of heresies. Allāh – glory be to Him – says in His Glorious Quran: (And so take what the Apostle assigns to you, and deny yourselves that which he withholds from you). He-glory be to Him-also says: (then let those beware who withstand the Apostle’s order, lest some trial should befall them, or a grievous Penalty be inflicted on them). The Almighty – praise be to Him – also says: (Verily in the Apostle of Allāh ye have a good example for him who looketh unto Allāh and the Last Day, and remembereth Allāh much). He says too: (The vanguard [of Islam] the first of those who forsook [their homes] and of those who gave them aid, and [also] those who follow them in [all] good deeds, - well-pleased is Allāh with them, as are they with Him: for them hath He prepared Gardens under which rivers flow to dwell therein for ever: that is the supreme Felicity). Allāh also says: (This day I have perfected your religion for you Islam as your religion). The verses to that effect are numerous. To bring about such birthday celebrations (Mawalid) purports that Allāh-praise be to Him-has not yet completed the religion to this nation, and that the Apostle (Peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) did not announce what should be observed by the nation, till those later people came up, and introduced into the Religion of Allāh what Allāh has not sanctioned, on the pretence that this matter enables them to get close to the consent of Allāh, despite the fact that it, sure enough, involves a serious menace, and an opposition to Allāh-praise be to Him-as well as to His Apostle (Peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) at a time when the Almighty Allāh-glory be to Him- had perfected the religion for His human beings, and completed His favour upon them. As also the Apostle (Peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) had fulfilled his plain true mission, and left no means leading to paradise, and keeping away from the Fire without being elucidated. It is established as valid in the authentic Hadith (traditions) that ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr –may Allāh be pleased with both of them-passed on a report where in the Apostle of Allāh-peace be unto him-said : (Never was a Prophet sent out by Allāh without being assigned the task of guiding his people to the best of what he teaches them, and warning against the malice of what he teaches them)-Muslim transmitted it in his Sahih. Consider the fact that our Prophet (Peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) is, no doubt, the most distinguished, and the Seal of the prophets; let alone the fact of his precedence with respect to information and guidance. If birthday celebrations (Mawalid) were considered religious, and sanctioned by Allāh –praise be to Him-the Apostle (Peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) would have expounded the matter to the people, or done it himself in his lifetime; or his companions-may Allāh be pleased with them- would have performed it themselves at least. Since celebrations such as these were never performed, it has become known that they have absolutely nothing to do with Islam.

The matter of such celebrations is rather one of the evil innovations against which the Apostle (Peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) admonished his people, as it was demonstrated in the aforesaid traditions. There are many other traditions to that effect, such as the saying of the Apostle (Peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) in the course of a Friday sermon: (and now to our topic: the best speech is that of the Qur'an, and the best guidance is that of Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) and the most wicked matter is that of heretic innovations, and each heresy is an error). Imam Muslim transmitted it in his Sahih.

Verses and traditions about this matter are a great many. A group of scholars has declared rejection of, and warning against such celebrations as these (Mawalid), in pursuance of the aforementioned evidences and their likes. Some later scholars, however, were at variance with the others, and approved of such celebrations, provided they are free from such reprehensible actions as being immoderate in their view about the characteristics of the Apostle (Peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) and the company of men and women, and using musical instruments, and such other things as rejected by the immaculate Revelation, and still they held them to be good innovations. The Islamic legal standard is to refer the case at issue among people to the Scripture (Quran) of Allāh and the precepts (Sunnah) of His Apostle Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) Allāh-glory be to Him- also says: (O you who believe, obey Allāh, and obey the Apostle, and those charged with authority among you. If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allāh and his Apostle, if ye do believe in Allāh and the Last Day: That is best, and most suitable for final determination). The Almighty also says: (Whatever it be wherein ye differ, the decision thereof is with Allāh). We have referred this matter, to wit, Mawalid celebrations, to the Scripture of Allāh-glory be to Him- and found out that it enjoins on us the duty of obeying the Apostle (Peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) in what he brought forth, admonishes us against what he prohibited us from doing, and informs us that Allāh-glory be to Him - has perfected the religion for this nation. Since this sort of celebration is not part of what the Apostle (Peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) brought forth, it has nothing to do with the religion Allāh perfected for us, and enjoined us therein to obey the Apostle. We have, too, referred the matter to the precepts (Sunnah) of the Apostle (Peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) and found therein that he never performed such a thing, nor enjoined on us to do it, and neither did his companions – may Allāh be pleased with them. We have, thus, learned that such a matter has nothing whatsoever to do with religion, and that it is rather a kind of heretic innovations, and imitation of the people of the Scripture - Jews and Christians - in their festivals.

Such being the case, it becomes quite clear for any person possessed of the least power of mental perception, the desire to know the truth as well as being fair in seeking it, that birthday celebrations (Mawlid) have nothing to do with Islam; yet they are rather some kinds of heretic innovations that Allāh - glory be to Him - and His Apostle (Peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) enjoined us to abandon and to be cautious of. Any sensible person should not be dazzled by the great number of people doing such a thing in all countries, since truth is not to be recognized through the numerousness of doers, but it is recognized through the Islamic legal evidences, as the Almighty Allāh says on Jews and Christians: (And they say: "None shall enter Paradise unless he be a Jew or Christian." ...Those are their [vain] desires. Say: "Produce your proof if ye are truthful). The Almighty also says: (Wert thou to follow the common run of those on earth, they would lead thee away from the Way of Allāh).

Furthermore, most of these (Mawlid) – heretic as they are - are not quite free from other reprehensible actions, such as the company of men and women, use of songs and musical performances, drinking alcoholic beverages and narcotics as well as other evils. Besides, there may occur what is more tremendous; that is, gross polytheism through exaggeration and exceeding the proper characteristics of the Apostle (Peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) or those of others of holymen, as well as invoking him, appealing to him for aid, petitioning him, and believing that he is cognizant of the Unseen, and such other atheistic things as practiced by lots of people in the course of their celebrating the Mawlid of the Prophet (Peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) and of others of the so-called holymen. In the authentic hadith, the Apostle (Peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) said: (Beware of exceeding the proper limits of religion; since people, earlier on, were perished with this matter). He (Peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) also said: (Do not lavish praise on me, as did the Christians with the Son of Mariam. I am only a human being. So says the Servant and the Apostle of Allāh). al-Bukhari excerpted it in his Sahih from the account of ‘Omar - may Allāh be pleased with him. The remarkable and astonishing thing about the matter is that lots of people attend actively to these innovated celebrations and uphold them, while they fail to do what Allāh made incumbent upon them such as attending Friday and congregational prayers. In spite of it, they pay no attention to them. Neither do they think they had committed a gross vile deed. This is due, beyond doubt, to weakness of faith and lack of discernment as well as to copiousness of various trespasses and sins reigning over the hearts. May Allāh favour us and all Muslims with the grace of safety from these evils. Among other things, some of them think that the Apostle (Peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) attends the mawlid. They, therefore, rise in honour of him with open arms.

This is a sort of patent falsehood and the vilest ignorance, as the Apostle (Peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) shall not rise out of his grave before the Day of Judgement, neither does he contact any human beings nor does he attend their meetings. He is rather abiding in his grave until the Day of Judgement, with his soul quite settled with his Rabb highly elevated in the Eternal Abode, as Allāh - glory be to Him - says in the Quranic Chapter “Al-Mu’minoun”: (After that, at length, ye will die. Again, on the Day of Judgement, will ye be raised up). The Prophet (Peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) said: (I am the first, whose grave will split on the Day of Judgement, and then I shall be the first intercessor, and the first to be granted the right of interceding).

This glorious verse in addition to the holy tradition, and all other verses and traditions to the same effect, all indicate that the Prophet (Peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) and his likes of the dead will only rise out of their graves on the Day of Judgement. This matter is incontrovertibly based on the consensus of Muslim scholars. Every Muslim should, therefore, beware of such things, and be on his guard against such innovations of the ignorants and their likes as heresies and superstitions, for which Allāh has revealed no legitimization. What a perfect helper and trustee Allāh is. And there is no power and no strength save in Him.

As to praying for Allāh to bless his Apostle and grant him peace, it is the best of approaches and deeds of righteousness as the Almighty Allāh says: (Allāh and His Angels send blessings on the Prophet: O ye that believe! Send ye blessings on him, and salute him with all respect). The Prophet (Peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) also said: (Whoever sends blessings once on me, Allāh shall bless him the tenfold of it). Such an act is licit at all times, and confirmed at the end of each prayer. It is even imperative, according to a group of learned men, in the last Tashahud of each prayer, and a confirmed Sunnah on several occasions such as following the call-to-prayer, upon speaking of the Apostle (Peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him) and on Friday and Friday-nights according to so many a tradition (Hadith)

May Allāh grant us, along with all Muslims, success in comprehending his religion and maintenance of it. May He, too, favour us all with sticking fast to the Sunnah and caution against the heresy. Allāh is All-kind and Magnanimous, and may peace and blessing of Allāh be unto our Prophet Muhammad, his family, and his companions.



I have included this fatwā of bin Bāz in its entirety lest any detractor accuse me of altering it in any way. I leave it for the reader to make what sense they can of it in light of their own understanding of the issue. I also include the following refutation by Sunni ‘ulemā’:

THE BEGINNING OF THE CELEBRATION OF MĪLĀD ŠARĪF

As we all know as matter of fact, that when ever people want to promote and advance their ways, they pave the way to spread their falsehood among the Muslims masses and those who have very limited knowledge by misquoting what the ʾImāms of ʾIslām have stated or written. It is alleged by those people who disagree with Mīlād that ʾImām Ibn Kathīr stated in his book “*al-Biʿdayah wa Niʿhayah*” in Vol.11, p. 172 the following: “It was the Fatimy Government which ruled Egypt from 357-567 who was responsible for the celebration of Mīlād”.

We say in reply to the above that after having consulted the above reference we found that it was a sheer lie, for we read that page and we found that the above is but allegations, deceit and dishonesty when quoting the renowned scholars of ʾIslām. However, if they insist on the above, we demand that they produce it before us if there is any truth in what they allege!

Allow me now to quote before you what ʾImām Ibn Kathīr has actually said in the same book “*al-Biʿdayah wa Niʿhayah*” Vol.13, p. 136: “Sultan Muzaffar used to arrange the celebration of the Mīlād Šarīf with honour, glory, dignity and grandeur. In this connection he used to organise a magnificent festival”. Then he said in praise of that man: “He was a pure-hearted, brave and wise ʿālim (scholar) and a just ruler, may Allāh ﷻ shower His Mercy upon him and grant him an exalted status.”

Šaykh Abu-Khattab Ibn Dihyah also wrote a book for him on the Mīlād Šarīf entitled “Enlightenment on the Birthday of the Bearer of Good News, the Warner”. For this book Sultan Muzaffar awarded him a gift of one thousand Dinars. He then said: “Every year his expenditure on the Mīlād Šarīf amounted to three hundred thousand Dinars”.

Examine carefully, dear brother or sister, such praise which has been conferred by ʾImām Ibn Kathīr upon that man, where he described him as “a wise ʿalim, brave and pure-hearted” and then concluded by saying “may Allāh ﷻ shower his Mercy upon him and grant him an exalted status”. He did not say he was a corrupt or evil, he did not say he was committing “Bidʿah” or deeds which leads a person to be doomed, as it is alleged by those who reject the celebration of Mīlād Šarīf.

I refer you to that very reference which has been quoted to read further for yourselves what ʾImām Ibn Kathīr has added in praise of this Sultān.

I would strongly recommend as well that you consult what ʾImām Zahābī in his book “Biography of the Elites”, Vol. 22, p. 336 has said in description of this Sultān:

“Sultān al-Muzaffar was a humble generous follower of the way of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and he liked the scholars and narrators of Hadīth”.

POINT TWO

VIEWPOINT OF THE ʾIMĀMS OF THE MUSLIM ʾUMMAH
ON THE CELEBRATION OF MĪLĀD ŠHARĪF

1. Imām Jalālu-d-dīn al-Hafiz as-Suyufī in his famous book “*al-Hawī li-l-Fatawī*” allocated a special chapter to that topic and named it “The Excellence of Objective in Celebrating the Mawlid” where he said: “The question under consideration is what is the verdict of the Šhariʿah on celebrating the Holy Birthday of the Noble Prophet ﷺ during the month of Rabiʿa-l-ʾĀwwal (ربيع الأول). From the point of view of Šhariʿah is this a praiseworthy action or a blameworthy one? And do those who arrange such celebrations receive blessings or not?”

He said: “The reply to this question is that in my view the Milād Šharīf (Celebration of the Birthday of the Noble Prophet ﷺ) is in fact such an occasion of happiness on which people assemble and recite the Holy Qurʾān to the extent that is easy. Then they relate the prophecies concerning the appearance of the Noble Prophet ﷺ that have been transmitted in ʾAḥādīṭh and ʾAthār, and the miraculous events and signs that took place on his birth. Then food is set before them and according to their desire they partake thereof to satisfaction. This festival of celebrating the birthday of the Noble Prophet ﷺ is a Bidʿah Ḥasanah (good innovation) and those arranging it will get blessing, since in such a celebration is found the expression of joy and happiness at the greatness and eminence of the Noble Prophet ﷺ and his birth.”

2. Even ibn Taymiyyah said in his book “Necessity of the Right Path”, p. 266, 5th line from the bottom of that page, published by Dar al-Hadith, the following: “As far as what people do during the Milād, either as a rival celebration to that which the Christians do during the time of Christ's birthday or as an expression of their love and admiration and a sign of praise for the Noble Prophet ﷺ, Allah will surely reward them for their making ʾIjtihād (اجتهاد)”. He then said: “Although Milād was not practised by the *salaf* they should have done so since there is no objection against it from the point of view of the Šhariʿah”.

And we certainly only celebrate Milād out of love and admiration to the Prophet of all Mankind ﷺ.

3. al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-Asqalanī was asked, concerning a reference of Imam Jalaluddin as-Suyuti, about Milād Šharīf. His reply was: “Milād Šharīf is, in fact, an innovation, which was not transmitted from any pious predecessor in the first three centuries. Nevertheless, both acts of virtue as well as acts of abomination are found in it (i.e. sometimes acts of virtue are found therein and sometimes acts of abomination).

If in the Milād Šharīf only acts of virtue are done and acts of abomination are abstained from, then the Milād Šharīf is a Bidʿah Ḥasanah (good innovation), otherwise not.”

He then added "... to do any virtuous act and to observe it annually as means of recollection for any special day on which Allāh Ta'ala has bestowed any favour or removed any calamity is a form of showing gratitude to Allah. Gratitude to Allāh Ta'ala is expressed through different kinds of 'Ibādah (worship) – prostration and standing in prayer, charity and recitation of the Holy Qur'ān. And what greater favour from Allah ﷻ can there be than the appearance of the Prophet of Mercy ﷺ on this day (i.e. 12th of Rabī' al-ʾAwwal)?"

Some people do not limit it and celebrate the Milād Sharīf on any day of Rabī' al-ʾAwwal. Nay, some people have extended it even more and increased the period to the whole year. According to the latter, the Milād Sharīf can be celebrated on any day of the year. The objective here is the same, i.e. to rejoice at and celebrate the Holy Birth of the Prophet ﷺ.

4. ʾImām Abu-Bakr Abdullāh ad-Dimashqī compiled a number of books on the subject and called them "Collection of Traditions on the Birth of the Chosen Prophet", "The Pure Expression on the Birthday of the Best of Creations" and "The Spring for the Thirsty One on the Birth of the Rightly Guided".

5. ʾImām al-Hafīz al-ʿIraqī wrote a book and called it "The Pure Spring on the Sublime Birth".

6. ʾImām Ibn Dahyah wrote a book and called it "Enlightenment on the Birthday of the Bearer of Good News, The Warner".

7. ʾImām Mulla ʿAlī Qarī wrote a book and called it "The Quenching Spring on the Birthday of the Prophet".

8. ʾImām Shamsu-d-Dīn bin Naṣr ad-Dimashqī said in his book, "The Spring for the Thirsty One on the Birth of the Rightly Guided", about the story of Abu Lahab, that he will receive a light punishment every Monday for expressing joy at the birth of the Noble Prophet ﷺ on that day.

The ʾImām said in the following verse of poetry: [translated]

If such a Kāfir was denounced in the (Qur'ān)

And perished are his hands, and in the Flames is his eternal abode

It is narrated that every Monday

His torment is made easy for his Joy at the Birth of Aḥmad

What is the expectation then of a servant who spent all his life

Happy with the arrival of Aḥmad and who died on the Oneness of Allah.

9. ʾImām Shamsu-d-Dīn Ibn al-Jazri, the Imam of Reciters, wrote a book and named it "The Scent of Notification on the Blessed Birthday".

10. ʾImām al-Hafīz Ibn al-Jawzi said, in the description of Milād: "Peace and Tranquillity takes over during that year and a good glad tidings to obtain your wish and inspiration".

11. ʿImām Abu-Shamah, The Shaykh of al-Ḥafiz an-Nawawī, said: “The best of the innovations of our times is what is carried out on the day corresponding to the birthday of our Beloved Prophet ﷺ, where people give out donations, practice what is right, express their joy and happiness; doing so is surely a sign of love and admiration for the Prophet ﷺ”.

12. ʿImām al-Ḥafiz al-Qastalanī, who gave commentary on Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, said: “May Allāh shower his Mercy upon a person who takes the days of the month of Rabīʿ al-ʾĀwwal, in which the Noble Prophet ﷺ was born, as days of feast and celebration for doing so is the best cure for the heart of an ailing person.”

Following all of the above, there is yet another false accusation, i.e.

THOSE WHO OPPOSE MĪLĀD ṢHARĪF CLAIM THAT IF MĪLĀD WAS PART OF THE “DĪN”, THEN SURELY THE PROPHET ﷺ WOULD HAVE DONE IT HIMSELF AND HE WOULD HAVE MADE IT CLEAR FOR THE PEOPLE TO CELEBRATE IT!

THE REPLY IS:

Not everything which the Prophet ﷺ did or did not do or his Companions did or did not do would ultimately make things “HARAM”. Since the Prophet ﷺ himself said: “He who introduces a good new Sunnah in ʾIs-lām will be rewarded for it ...”

ʿImām ash-Shāfiʿī رحمه الله said: “Anything which enjoys the backing of Ṣharʿah cannot be an innovation even if the Companions did not practice it, because their abstention from doing something may have been due to a particular reason which was there at that time, or they have left it for something which happens to be better, or perhaps news about a particular thing did not reach them all”.

Therefore, whosoever alleges that this thing is Haram on the basis that the Noble Prophet ﷺ did not practice it, then surely he has alleged something which has no foundation or backing in Shari'ah and thus his allegation is refuted and rejected.



A careful reading of these two often diametrically opposed views should give the reader or the listener an idea of both sides of the story. I would also refer the reader to our publication, “*The Defense of the Sunnah: An Analysis of the Theory and Practices Of Tasawwuf*” by Dr. Ibrahim Hakim ash-Shaghouri, which is available on our website: wp.GreenMountainSchool.Org.

At the same time I would like to remind the reader or the listener that in all of this we are still talking, for the most part, about the worldly exoteric view of the Prophet ﷺ and have not yet begun to unveil the more interior and eternal dimensions of his being.

Perhaps the best place to begin looking at the inner pre-eternal esoteric (*bāṭin*) view of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ is in the writing of the Shaykh al-Akbār ﷺ, the self professed Seal of the Awliyā^o, who said: “Truly, the Unveiling (*kashf*) of the Prophet ﷺ is of the most all-encompassing Unveiling (*kashf*). It is entirely a Divine Theophany (*tajalliātu-l-ʿIlāhiyah*) – of the All-One Praise-Glory (*al-ḥamd*) that He ﷺ is. That is how the Muḥammadan Self-Constitution (*dhāt al-Muḥammadiyah*) forms the Divine Countenance (*wajhu-llāh*), and modulates and reflects It, noumenally (in Itself) and phenomenally.

“That is how the Prophet ﷺ seals what is open and opens what is sealed. Though His ﷺ Spiritual Successors, especially the First and the Last of Them, i.e., Ḥaḍrat ʿAlī ؑ and the Guided One, Ḥaḍrat al-Mahdi (المهدي) ؑ, and *those in between*, upon Divine Invitation and Empowerment in the Muḥammadan Image (*sūratu-l-Muḥammadiyah*), have also reached Places of Glory around That-Which-Is [Allāh ﷻ], by passing through the Doors of Power (opened and kept open by the Ascension (*mirāj*/المعراج), there is no Prophet, nor Messenger, nor Angel, let alone Walī (ولي), before and after Him ﷺ, for Muḥammad ﷺ is Muḥammad ﷺ, just as Allāh ﷻ is Allah ﷻ.”

“He *is* what he is – *fīhi mā fīhi* (فيه ما فيه) or in it what is in it – meaning He is what He is.

“Existence (Peace) and Glory (Blessings) of Allāh ﷻ, without end, be upon Muḥammad ﷺ, the First Light-Spirit – the Absolute Radiant Point of Reality.

“The Spirit of Muḥammad (*ruḥu-l-ʿadhimi-l-muḥammadiyah*) ﷺ is, and was, before the Pen (*qalam*/قلم), the Tablet (*lawḥ*/لوح), and the Throne (*ʿarsh*/عرش). Muḥammad ﷺ is the spirit being (*wujudu-ruhīyah*), around Whose Point of Singularity (*nūn*/ن) the Divine Confluences of Light gather and originate.”

“Indeed Muḥammad ﷺ is Reality Itself (*ḥaqīqah*/حقيقة) – with or without the constitutional Realm of Oneness – and the Last Noetic Appearance in Phenomena emanating from the glorious connective Foliage of the Prophetic Tree of Reality, Certainty, and Theophany, who ﷺ said, ‘the first thing Allāh created was my Spirit.’” (*ʿawwalu ma khalāqa-llāhu ruḥi*) And he ﷺ also said “I was a Prophet before ʿĀdam was between the clay and the water (*kuntu nabiyyan wa ʿadamu bayni-l māʿi wa-t-ṭīn*)”.

“By my Utter Secret, Muḥammad ﷺ is That-Which-Is; the Greater Spirit – Reality-in-Itself (*ḥaqīqah*/حقيقة).

“The Reality-in-Itself (*ḥaqīqah*/حقيقة) is that which is beyond your limited mirror and your knowledge, the Most Hidden Elementary Constitution of the First Universal Intellect (*al-ʿaql kulli-l-ʿawwal*).

“His ﷺ First ‘M’ (*mīm*/م) is the Hierarchic-Seat (*maqām*/مقام), i.e., The Heart, of the Divine Presence (*ḥadratu-l-ʿIlāhiyah*).

“His ﷺ ‘H’ (*ha*/ه) is the Reality (*ḥaqīqah*/حقيقة) of the Divine Being (*wujudu-llāh*/وجود الله).

“His ﷺ Second ‘M’ (*mīm*/م) is the Being or Existence (*wujūd*/وجود) of the Divine Reality (*ḥaqīqatu-l-ḥaqāʾiq*).

“His ﷺ ‘D’ (*dal*/د) is the Truth (*al-ḥaqq*) of the Divine Oneness (*ʿaḥadiyah-wahdaniyah*), which – by Itself – is the Trace (*lutf*/لطف) and Secret (*sirr*/سر) of the Divine Being in the Realm of Union (*ʿalāmu-l-waḥdāt*/عالم وحدات).

“By my soul, He ﷺ is the Odd and the Even, the Twice-Within and the Twice-Without, neither of the East (*mashriq*/مشرق) nor of the West (*maghrib*/مغرب), whose Essence none can approach, for nothing enters It and no one comes out of It, and Whose Subjective Being and Form (*wujūd nunnīyah muḥammadiyah*) shapes, moves and overwhelms the oceanic currents of manifestation, within and without (*bāṭin wa dhāhir*).

“Oh you among the children of ʿĀdam ﷺ who have only perceived the shifting shadows of the Muḥammadan Reality (*ḥaqīqatu-l-Muḥammadiyah*) in the scanty mirror of your self-constitution!

“In the Phenomenal-Isthmus (*barzakḥian*) Form of Muḥammad ﷺ, that Blessed Soul ﷺ underwent Ascension (*miʿrāj*/مِعْرَاج) by His own Primordial Sainthood (*walāyatu-l-ʿazaliyah*) and by His own Self-Constitution (*dhātu-l-kḥuludu-l-Muḥammadiyah*).

“And because the Universal Wave-Fronts and Embers of Attraction reached their ultimate zenith and apex due to His own Reality ﷺ being the Entire Greater Spirit Itself (*ruḥu-l-ʿaḍḥimu-l-kullīyah*), nothing veiled (nor unveiled) Him ﷺ from the Presence of the Most Sacred Essence of Allāh ﷻ, just as no radiance would be powerful enough to hide and manifest Muḥammad ﷺ as Muḥammad ﷺ, other than the Being of Allāh ﷻ.

“Thus Muḥammad ﷺ reached what was to be reached in and of the Essence of the First and Last Single Point of Truth, and was with Allāh ﷻ as the Secret of Allāh (*sirru-llāh*/سر الله), without eidetic veils and parallel manifestations.

“He reached to the point such that the Two Bows of Reality (*qāba qawsayn*/قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ) – and to That-Which-Is “Closer Still” (‘*aw ‘ādna*/أَوْ أَدْنَى) – of Being and Witnessing (*al-wujūd wa ash-shuhūd*), and of the Absolute and the Possible (*al-wājibu-l-wujūd wa-l-mum-kīnu-l-wujūd*), were nothing but Muḥammad ﷺ.”

فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَى

fa kāna qāba qawsayni ‘aw adāna

He was two bow-lengths away or even closer

(Sūratu-n-Najm 53:9)



In another essay on this subject entitled, “*Secrets of the Prophet* ﷺ” I have cited a ḥadīth from at-Tirmidhī رحمه الله, where the Prophet ﷺ says:

“‘awwalu mā khālaqa-llāhu nūran.”

“The first [thing] created by Allāh ﷻ was Light.”

Allāh ﷻ conceived His creation in the darkness of non-existence and with the light of His creative act – *kun fayā kūn* (كُنْ فَيَكُونُ) – brought everything into existence. The First Light created was like a shadow appearing against the dark background of non-existence.

at-Tirmidhī also reported the Prophet ﷺ having said, “The first thing Allāh ﷻ created was the Intellect (*al-‘aql*/العقل).” He ﷺ also said, “The first thing that Allāh ﷻ created was the Pen (*al-qalam*/القلم).”

The Intellect takes from Allāh ﷻ without intermediary, the bearer of all known things. None of the knowledge of higher and lower being is hidden from it. It is the primordial light in its passive aspect as recipient of the knowledge of what is to be, while the Pen is the primordial light in its active aspect of writing this knowledge on the Guarded Tablet at the command of Allāh ﷻ. “The first thing that Allāh ﷻ created was the Pen and He ﷻ said to it: ‘Write! So it wrote what is to be forever.’” (aṭ-Ṭabarānī and Abu Nu‘aym)

From this First Light all of creation, with all its many varied forms and meanings, unfolds till the end of time. This primordial light is called *Light of Muḥammad* ﷺ (*nūru-l-muḥamaddiyyah*/نُورُ الْمُحَمَّدِيَّةِ) – which is the first light against the dark background of non-existence.

In another variant it is related that Jābir ibn ‘Abd Allāh رضي الله عنه said to the Prophet ﷺ:

“O Messenger of Allāh, may my father and mother be sacrificed for you, tell me of the first thing Allāh ﷻ created before all things.” He said: “O Jābir, the first thing Allāh ﷻ created was the light of your Prophet from His light, and that light remained (lit. ‘turned’) in the midst of His Power for as long as He wished, and there was not, at that time, a Tablet or a Pen or a Paradise or a Fire or an angel or a heaven or an earth. And when Allāh ﷻ wished to create creation, he divided that Light into four parts and from the first made the Pen, from the second the Tablet, from the third the Throne, [and from the fourth everything else].”¹

“ana mina-l-lāhi wa al-mu³minūna minnī.”

“I am from Allāh ﷻ
and the people of belief are from me.”

“inna-llāha khalāqa rūḥa-n-nabiyyi min dhātihi
wa khalāqa al-‘ālama bi ‘asrihi min-nūri muḥammadin .”

“Truly, Allāh created the Spirit of the Prophet from His Essence,
then He created the whole Universe of forms
and (veiled) all its secrets with the Light of Muhammad.”

Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Gilāni ربه, in his book *Sirr al-asrar fi ma yahtaju ilayh al-‘abrār*, said: “Know that since Allāh ﷻ first created the soul of Muḥammad ربه from the light of His beauty, as He said: ‘I created Muḥammad from the light of My Face,’ and as the Prophet ربه said: ‘The first thing Allāh ﷻ created is my soul, and the first thing Allāh ﷻ created is the Pen, and the first thing Allāh ﷻ created is the Intellect’ – what is meant by all this is one and the same thing, and that is the *ḥaqīqatu-l-muḥammadiyyah* (الحقيقة المحمدية). However, it was named a light because it is completely purified from darkness, as Allāh ﷻ said: ‘There has come to you from Allāh ﷻ Light and a Clear Book.’ It was also named an Intellect (عقل/‘aql) because it is the cause for the transmission of knowledge, and the Pen (qalam/قلم) is the means by which it wrote in the world of letters. The Muḥammadan soul (ar-rūḥu-l-muḥammadiyyah/الروح المحمدية) is therefore the quintessence of all created things and the first of them and their origin.

1. There are, to be sure, many *muḥadithūn* who claim this to be a fabricated ḥadīth, and further state, that wherever “nūr” (نور) is used in reference to the Prophet ربه, it ‘only’ indicates his guidance and teachings to people.

The Prophet ﷺ said: “I am from Allāh ﷻ and the believers are from me, and Allāh ﷻ created all souls from me in the spiritual world and He did so in the best form. It is the name of the totality of mankind in that primordial world, and after its creation by four thousand years, Allāh ﷻ created the Throne (*al-‘arsh/العرش*) from the Light of Muḥammad himself ﷺ, and from it the rest of creation.”

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ
وَأَشْهَدُهُمْ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ
قَالُوا بَلَىٰ ۖ شَهِدْنَا ۚ أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ

wa-‘idh ‘akhadha rabbuka mim-banī ‘ādama
min ḍhuhūrihim ḍhurriyyatahum
wa ‘ashhadahum ‘alā ‘aṇfusihiḥ ‘alastu bi-rabbikum ;
qālū balā shahidānā ;
an taqūlū yawma-l-qiyāmati ‘innā kunnā ‘aṇ hadhā ghāfilīn

When your Sustainer took out all their descendants
from the loins of the children of Adam
and made them testify against themselves ‘Am I not your Lord?’
they said, ‘We testify that indeed You are!’
Lest you say on the Day of Rising, ‘We knew nothing about this.’
(Sūratu-l-A‘rāf 7:172)



When I first spoke about the above I was rounded upon by the various *ḍhahiri* exotericists attending who criticised me bitterly for even suggesting that the Prophet ﷺ was *light*. They insisted that all such references to his ﷺ being Light were strictly metaphorical and did not in any way mean that he a himself was light citing the ‘āyat:

اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
allāhu nūru-s-samāwati wa-l-‘arḍ
Allāh is the light of the heavens and the earth
(Sūratu-n-Nūr 24:35)

and that by writing and saying what I had, even though I was quoting very august personalities among the ‘ulema’ and ‘awliya’, I was guilty of *shirk* and was without doubt clearly a polytheist (*mushrik*) who was definitely outside of the pale of ‘Islām. In other words I had been declared (*takfīr*) not to be a Muslim but a *kāfir mushrik*.

But we say that the light of the Prophet ﷺ shines at all levels. It fills this world, the barazkh, and the spiritual worlds, dispelling the darkness of ignorance and disbelief, and is destined to shine across the ages till the end of time. Of course the Prophet ﷺ is a man, but a man unlike any other in that it was to him that was revealed the Guidance and it was with him that religion was brought to perfection.

لَا أَنَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَا الْكَذَّابُ الْوَاحِدُ ط

qul °innamā °anā basharum-mithlukum
yūḥa °ilayyāā °annamāā °ilahukum °ilahun wāḥid

Say: I am only a mortal like you.

My Lord revealed to me that your Allāh is only One Allāh.

(Sūratu-l-Kahf 18:110)

The important qualificatory phrase in this verse shows us that the Prophet ﷺ was a completely different sort of human being from anyone else, then or now. For none of us can say he is divinely inspired as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was. Rather, as is said in a poetic ode to the Prophet ﷺ which is often sung at gatherings after singing *al-Burda* [The Ode of the Prophetic Mantle] by al-Busayrī:

Muḥammad is a human being, but not like humankind;

He is a ruby, while people are as stones.

Though the Prophet ﷺ is the Light of Allāh ﷻ, which is apparent through many °āyāt and also *ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth*, he is of course a *created* light, as only Allāh ﷻ is uncreated in, by, of and unto Himself Alone.

Anyone who believes otherwise has made the mistake that Christians make concerning Jesus ﷺ, or Hindus make with their Avatars.

An ascriptive (°*idafa*) grammatical construction like *Nūr Allāh* does not show that this Nūr or ‘Light’ is an attribute of Allah ﷻ Himself. Rather, the ascriptive construction in this case is called °*idafa tashrif*, or an ‘ascription of ennoblement’, like the title *Bayt Allah* (بيت الله) or “The House of Allah” for the Ka°bah in Makkah is named for its nobility, and does not mean that Allāh ﷻ lives inside it, much less that it is a divine attribute. Or, like the she-camel that was sent to Ṭḥamud, and named in the Qur°ān, “*Naqat Allah*” (ناقة الله) or “The She-Camel of Allah”, was any more that an ascription of ennoblement. Its inviolability did not mean it was ridden by Allāh ﷻ, or was a divine attribute of Allāh ﷻ. °*Astaghfirullāh!*

The problem with the exotericists and the literalists is that they cannot, or refuse to, see beyond their own self imposed limitations.

صُرُّكُمْ عُمِي فَهَلْ يَرْجُونَ

ṣummum bukmun ʿumyun fa hum lā yarjiʿūn

Deaf, dumb, and blind they will not return (to the way).

(Sūratu-l-Baqarah 2:18)

Some of the Companions ﷺ were given to see the light of the Prophet ﷺ as brighter than both the sun and moon, for when they walked with him they noticed that he cast no shadow on the ground. (at-Tirmidhī), and those who saw him in the full moon noticed that his blessed face was brighter than the moon, (at-Tirmidhī) and one of his Companions, the lady Rubayyīṣa ؓ, when asked to describe him, said, “My son, had you seen him, you would have seen the sun shining.” (at-Tirmidhī)

Among the Companions, ʿĀnas ibn Mālīk ؓ described how, when the Prophet ﷺ first entered Madinah, everything in Madinah became illuminated, and how, when he ﷺ died, the light disappeared. The phenomenon was so sudden that the Companions were taken aback and began to doubt whether they had ever really seen it at all. (Aḥmad and ibn Majah). This was only the light that radiated from his blessed body for Madinah itself remained the City of Light. Abū Hurayra related how they were once praying the night prayer of ʿishāʾ (العشاء) with the Prophet ﷺ and how the Prophet’s two grandsons, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn ؓ had climbed onto his back when he was in prostration. When he was done, he placed one of them on his right and the other on his left. Abū Hurayra asked him, “Shall I take them to their mother?” he ﷺ replied, “No”. Then a flashing light appeared from the sky, at which he said, “Go to your mother.” The light remained until they reached home. (Aḥmad and Ḥakīm)

And of course there is the well-known story told by ʿĀʾisha ؓ of how she saw the whole room fill with light one night, then it disappeared, while the Prophet ﷺ continued to call upon his Lord.

Then the room was filled with an even more powerful light which also disappeared after a while. She asked, “What is that light I saw?” he said, “Did you see it, oh ʿĀʾisha?” “Yes!” she replied. He ﷺ said, “I asked my Lord to grant me my nation.”

He gave me one third of them, so I praised and thanked Him. Then I asked him for the rest, so He gave me the second third, so I praised and thanked Him. Then I asked Him for the final third, so He gave it to me, so I praised and thanked Him.” She ﷺ also said that had she wished to pick up mustard seeds from the floor by this light she could have. (Abu Nu‘aym in *Hiliah*.)

When his wet-nurse, Halima as-Sa‘dia ؓ, first saw him, she laid her hand on him and he smiled. “When he smiled a light appeared from his mouth that rose to the sky.” (Bayhaqi and ibn Ishāq)

The light of the Prophet ﷺ is the most powerful in the universe, since he is the nearest created being to Allāh ﷻ, as is clearly apparent in the wording of the shahadah:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

lā ʾilāha ʾilla-llāh muḥammad rasūlu-llāh

Note that here is no punctuation between Allāh ﷻ and Muḥammad ﷺ. Angels are made of light, Qurʾān is light, the spirits of human beings are light, faith is light, knowledge is light, the sun, the moon, and the stars are also lights. The light of each human being depends upon their faith, knowledge, and virtue. The most powerful lights are those of Divine Messengers, then those of Prophets ﷺ, ʿawliyāʾ ؓ, virtuous believers, and in the end even those of sinful believers.

This is the hierarchy of human beings. Both the first and the last are human, all have lights, and all are slaves of Allāh ﷻ, but the distance between the top of the mountain and its bottom is so great that those at the bottom, in the Garden, will see those at the top as distant as, in this world, we see the stars at night. (at-Tirmidhī)

Shaykh Nūḥ Ha Mīm, when asked about this, said:

The Prophet ﷺ is the Light of Allah, something a believer can say because the Qurʾān affirms it in the verse:

قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُبِينٌ

qadā jākum mina-llāhi nūrun wa kitābum-mubīn

“There has come to you a Light from Allāh, and a Clear Book”

(Sūratu-l-Maʾidah 5:15).

The word Light has been explained by a number of classic Qurʾānic exegetes (mufasssīrūn/مفسرون) as follows:

(Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti:) “It is the Prophet ﷺ.” (*Tafsīr al-Jalalayn*, 139).

(Ibn Jarīr at-Tabarī:) “By Light He ﷺ means Muhammad ﷺ, through whom Allah ﷻ has illuminated the truth, manifested ʾIslām, and obliterated polytheism; since he is a light for whoever seeks illumination from him, which makes plain the truth, (*Jamiʿ al-Bayān*, 6.161).

(Fakhr ar-Razī:) “There are various positions about it, the first being that the Light is Muḥammad, and the Book is the Qurʾān.” (*at-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 11:194).

(al-Baghawī:) “It means Muḥammad ﷺ, or, according to a weaker position, it means ʾIslām.” (*Maʿālam at-Tanzīl*, 2.228).

And Qurtubī in (*ʾĀhkamu-l-Qurʾān*, 6.118) and Mawardī in (*an-Nukāt wa-l-ʿUyun*, 2.22) mention that interpreting *Nūr* as “Muḥammad” ﷺ. This was also the position of the ʾImām of Arabic grammar, [ʾIbrāhīm ibn Muḥammad] az-Zajjāj (d. 311/923).

All of which shows that the Prophet ﷺ is a light from Allāh ﷻ, according to the Qurʾān.

This is the interpretation of the earliest exegetes, for al-Tabari was the shaykh of the salaf in tafsīr; while explaining *Nūr* as “Islam” is an interpretation that came later.



يُرِيدُونَ أَن يُطْفِئُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ
وَيَأْتِي اللَّهَ لَا أَن يُضْمَرَ نُورُهُ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ

yurīdūna an yuṭfiʿū nūra-llāhi bi ʾafwahihim
wa yaʾba-llāhu ʾillā ʾan yutimma nūrahu
wa law kariha-l-kafirūn

They desire to put out the Light of Allāh with their mouths,
and Allāh will not consent except to perfect His Light,
however much the disbelievers dislike it.

(Sūrah at-Tawba 9:32)

And as much as they would like to put out the light of Allāh with their mouths, so too would they like that there were no *mawālīd* anywhere and so too would they like that slowly we would forget who Muḥammad ﷺ was and is just as they have destroyed his home and made a mockery and cheap travesty of Makkah and Madinah.

It was not for nothing that the Prophet ﷺ refused to bless Najd.

But we are determined that he ﷺ shall not be forgotten. We will not see him reduced to an illiterate delivery boy, an usher in a dark movie house, a simple message bearer and nothing more even if nothing less. No matter how much they dislike it we shall continue to celebrate his life ﷺ for what would this world be without him ﷺ?

A full moon rises over us.

The other moon disappears.

We never saw the like of your beauty.

Oh face of gladness!

You are the sun, you are the moon.

You are light upon light.

You are gold and even more priceless.

You are the light of our hearts.

Oh our beloved, Oh Muḥammad,

Oh star of both the east and the west,

Oh supporter, Oh praised one,

Oh ʿImām of the two Qiblas.

Whoever sees your face, gets happiness.

Oh the one who was kind and caring of all.

Your clear and cool fountain

is our goal on the Day of Reckoning.

ʿālimu-ṣ-ṣirri wa ʿakḥfā

mustajību-d-daʿawāt

rabbi far-ḥamnā jamīʿah

bi-jamīʿi-s-ṣālihāt

The Knower of the secret and even more hidden.

The One who accepts supplications.

Oh Lord forgive us all

for the sake of all the good deeds that have been done!

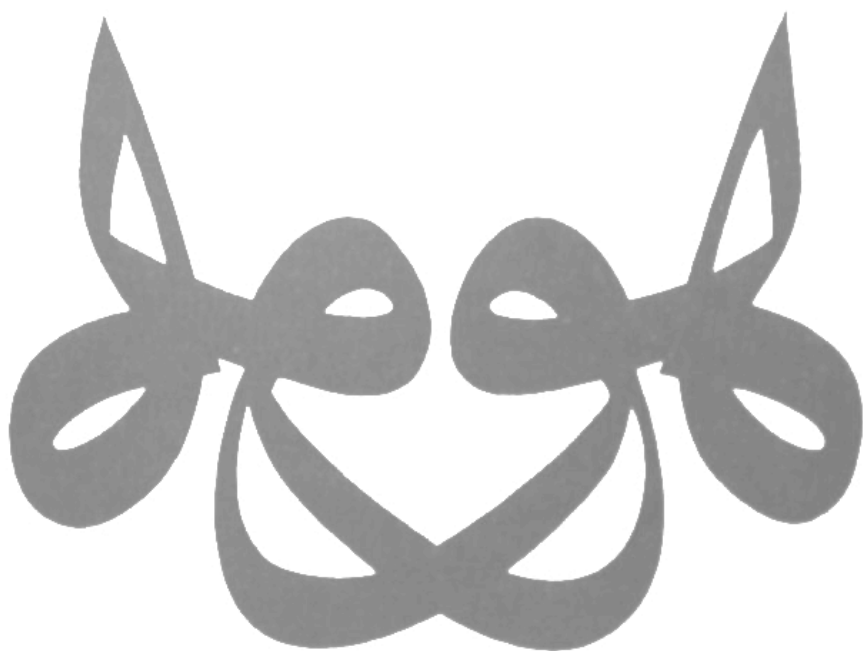
wa-llāhu ʿalim

فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَىٰ

fa kâna qāba qawsayni ʾaw adâna

He was two bow-lengths away or even closer

(Sūratu-n-Najm 53:9)



ن



noon hierographers

green mountain

virginia

usa